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ABSTRACT

The traditional approach to education and many new alternative approaches have failed to serve the needs of students or to prevent students from dropping out. Aware of the many emerging experiments to keep educational opportunities alive for restless students, the authors propose a complete design, drawing on the resources of local school authorities to provide nontraditional means to achieve a diploma. The instruments of the new design are a Regional Learning Service (RLS) and an External High School Diploma. The direction and policies of the RLS are determined by school institutions. Its purpose is to assist alienated high school age young people to identify their educational goals through counseling, testing, and field-based experiences. RLS also provides a variety of learning options in educational institutions or in the community, both of which will lead to a high school diploma. The External Diploma would be one awarded to a student after appropriate assessment of his pattern of nontraditional study by local school authorities and their confirmation to the State education department that the student had achieved specified performance objectives. The time to earn such a diploma, and the framework within which such a diploma might be earned, would depend on the individual student's needs, abilities, and motivations. (Author/JF)

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ALTERNATIVE PATHS TO THE HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

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Foreword

In a society as diverse and complex as ours, no institution can effectively serve all people. By the same token, schools should not be judged as failures if all students do not meet with immediate academic and life-related success. Most students respond well to what educators have come to describe as the traditional approach, while others require alternatives in non-traditional categories. The fact that we continue to have almost one million high school dropouts each year gives credence to the fact that the standard offerings simply do not meet the needs of all students. This unfortunate situation has caused the National Association of Secondary School Principals, as well as other responsible agencies, to continue the search for viable options. This monograph details two such alternatives which appear to hold much promise for the future.

In seeking solutions to pressing problems, the Association has been privileged in the past to collaborate with Stephen K. Bailey of Syracuse University.* One such partnership effort resulted in the publication of the monograph *Disruption in Urban Secondary Schools* (1970). Currently, Dr. Bailey has joined with colleagues Francis U. Macy and Donn F. Vickers to produce *Alternative Paths to the High School Diploma*. Their design involves the establishment of a regional learning service and programs leading to an external high school diploma. The latter will serve as a brokerage house for those seeking to earn secondary school certification within and outside the regular school environment. Although their study focuses on Central New York State we believe it has implications for the entire nation and we are grateful for the opportunity to publish the results.

As with all major studies, a number of participants deserve recognition. Individual acknowledgements can be found in the preface, but we cite the following for both leadership and financial assistance: Syracuse University

Research Corporation, the New York State Education Department, the Ford Foundation, and the United States Office of Education.

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Owen B. Kiernan
Executive Secretary
National Association of Secondary School Principals

Fall, 1973

*Stephen K. Bailey now serves as Vice-President, American Council on Education.

Preface

Educators and civic leaders in Central New York in the last year have worked with top officials of that state's education department to design alternative paths to the high school diploma. Intended for Central New York's young people and adults who have disassociated themselves from school by actively leaving it or passively tolerating it, the project was made possible by funds from the Ford Foundation and the U. S. Office of Education. The staff of the Policy Institute of the Syracuse University Research Corporation (SURC) [1] catalyzed and coordinated the study.

It is a matter of pride in Syracuse and in New York State that a variety of work-study and high school-equivalency examination programs exist for students poorly accommodated by regular school programs. In Syracuse, about 20 percent of the high school students leave school for part of the day or week for elements of their planned learning. Outside of Syracuse, a somewhat smaller percentage take career training away from their schools in centralized facilities.

Despite good programs in the Syracuse area, there is a consensus among its educators interviewed in 1972 that the local schools were still largely ineffective in meeting the needs of many. Their number was variously estimated at 2, 5, 10, or 20 percent of the high school student body—this in addition, of course, to those who had already dropped out and were unavailable.

The problem is not unique to Syracuse; it perplexes educators nationally. More than 40 percent of Americans over 22 do not have a high school diploma. A large percentage of students—some 900,000 annually—continue to drop out of high school before graduation. The social and economic price to society is well documented. Statistics on

[1] SURC is a not-for-profit corporation chartered in June 1957 by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York as an educational corporation.

unemployment, welfare, and crime do not adequately reflect, however, the sense of personal failure, the brooding hostility toward others, the psychic withdrawals and lash-outs that frequently accompany dropping out of an established system that seems to do well for many.

Less publicized, but a very real problem throughout the country, are the students who remain in school unable to find themselves or what they need. They include a few gifted students who are unchallenged, particularly in the senior year, and larger numbers of average students, turned off or yet to be turned on, whose diploma will facilitate their entry to neither job nor college.

A growing realization of these needs has led various educational systems to experiment with a number of alternatives to the existing high school "lockstep." Night schools, learning centers, high school-equivalency examinations, work-study programs, cities-as-classrooms, TV courses, correspondence schools, proprietary schools, manpower-training centers, school-connected independent study programs, all have emerged in recent years as valiant attempts to keep educational opportunities alive and various for those disabled by and disenchanted with the formal educational system.

Many of these pioneering experiments have already emerged in Central New York.[2] They are, in John Gardner's words, "bits and pieces of the educational revolution lying around disassembled." Many of them are valuable pieces but they do not provide a sufficient whole. They exist in a highly imperfect market where counseling and facilitating services are rudimentary or totally absent, and where there is no way to relate educational experiences outside the system to the world of high school validation and accreditation.

Superintendents, principals, guidance counselors, and teachers in the greater Syracuse area during a series of meetings in 1972 indicated that the needs of students were still poorly accommodated by both traditional and new programs. What they lack, according to those closest to the scene, are the following services and opportunities:

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[2] See Appendix.

- Alternative learning arrangements and support systems. For those under 17 and restive in school, existing work-study programs provide too few options. Several district superintendents in the Syracuse area have testified that large numbers of their students, possibly 20 percent of the student body, would benefit significantly from additional opportunities for educational experiences beyond the school. In spite of night courses, flexible day schedules in some schools, and liberalized age requirements, the high school equivalency diploma does not provide for the needs of alienated high-school-age youth.

- Adequate educational and vocational counseling. School counselors are seriously overburdened; they frequently lack the time and training necessary for dealing with troubled youngsters. Central counseling services for dropouts are non-existent. Nationally, 33 kinds of basic education programs are financed through 11 agencies of the federal government. Translated into community terms, such competing programs represent a cacophony of splintered jurisdictions. A young person, already turned off by school, cannot know which program, or combination of programs, might be of use to him.

- Alternative diploma programs. For a young person cut off from the formal school system, important skills learned in non-school environments do not coincide with the precise requirements of most high schools and of the High School Equivalency Examinations. Yet those skills are often intrinsically equivalent. No system currently exists by which judgments of professional educators about a student's life experiences can supplement academic accomplishments in school and on state tests in qualifying for the diploma.

Building on existing experimental programs for high school dropouts and "turned-offs," the people working in this project put together a design for learning that not just extends but transcends traditional educational arrangements. The new instruments, described in the following

design, are (1) a Regional Learning Service and (2) an External High School Diploma.

Responsibility and scholastic assessment remain, as they should, with local school authorities. Ultimate scholastic validation remains, as it must, with New York's Board of Regents and state education department. But a new educational support system and a new high school diploma program, outside as well as inside school walls, provide traditional authorities with non-traditional means for achieving important educational objectives.

The projected Regional Learning Service (RLS) would have important functions at both the post-secondary and at the secondary level. It would be a supplementary service to local educational authorities and subject to their policy control.

The Regional Learning Service would be a broker for individuals wishing to earn high school certification for learning acquired not only in accredited schools but also in a wide range of out-of-school educational experiences. Learning consultants at RLS would help students of all ages to define their own educational goals, assess their prior learning, diagnose their strengths and weaknesses, and facilitate their selection of learning experiences appropriate to the job opportunities and certification they seek.

The Regents External Diploma would be one awarded to a student after appropriate assessment of his pattern of non-traditional study by local school authorities, and their recommendation to the state education department that the student had achieved specified performance objectives. The time to earn such a diploma and the framework within which such a diploma might be earned would depend upon the individual student's needs, abilities, and motivations. Typically, however, his learning would not be constrained by, or limited to, formal classes in traditional settings.

Although the following design was made specifically for the Central New York region, it is in a generic sense applicable to any part of the country whose educators are searching for better answers to the problems of those who find the traditional high school an inadequate response to their learning needs. The design has meaning far beyond Syracuse, or beyond the State of New York, perhaps

beyond the United States. It represents an attempt not to "de-school" society, but to "re-tool" society for purveying essential educational services to those currently bypassed or inadequately judged by the formal school system.

Some people oppose facilitating further educational opportunities on three inter-related grounds:

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(1) that we already have an "over-educated" society—already too many under-employed with advanced degrees;

(2) that instead of making it easier for people to achieve traditional credentials, we should find ways of denigrating credentialism and promoting learning for its own sake; and

(3) that non-traditional studies will invariably water the stock of traditional academic standards.

Our responses to these three issues can be stated quite briefly. The entire monograph, of course, is our more complete answer.

FIRST, we do not accept the possibility of an "over-educated" population. We do entertain the possibility in the short run of an economy and a society that are still too primitive in their value systems to absorb educated humans at top levels of performance. But we conclude that the answer to this dilemma is not fewer educated people, but more. Surely the answer to dysfunction is to provide minds capable of changing, not knuckling under to, the society and the economy.

SECOND, credentials are society's surrogates for demonstrated skills and capacity. Until society itself substitutes other forms of recognition of intellectual ability for scholastic and academic credentials, justice demands that avenues to meaningful academic awards be opened to everyone—especially those for whom social, economic, and institutional barriers have represented an impossible hurdle to educational fulfillment. We have noted in our discussions over the past two years that a questioning of the virtues of credentials comes almost uniformly from those who already have them.

THIRD, one of the first challenges to existing academic

staff is to extend the range of their influence over non-traditional studies on campus as well as off. Because of their comparative novelty, most non-traditional study programs will be monitored by those excruciatingly eager to maintain the highest of academic standards.

The study was made possible by a grant from the Ford Foundation, where Edward J. Meade, Jr., and Clair List were especially responsible. Scores of schoolmen, civic leaders, community organizers, industrialists, labor union officers, and professional personnel in the area contributed advice and wisdom. Syracuse Superintendent of Schools John Gunning and his staff were helpful and cooperative. The Joint Management Team for Central New York educational planning, under the leadership of Burton Ramer, played an indispensable role in conceptualizing responsible options. Substantial research and writing contributions were made by Fred B. Smith and LeeAnn Sumnicht. Additional creative inputs from Nicholas Collis, Richard T. Frost, Wayne D. Jacox, Charles Jones, Dorothea Nelson, and Joyce Ross are to be found throughout the substance and style of this monograph. The authors owe a profound debt of gratitude to them.

Special thanks must go to New York's Commissioner of Education Ewald B. Nyquist and selected members of the staff of the State Education Department for their cooperation and assistance and to Seymour Weissman, Brooklyn educational entrepreneur extraordinaire, who for years has been practicing key parts of what we are now proposing.

And finally we extend our appreciation to Rosemary Halko, Pat Iacuone, Sue Hanley, and Debbie Dunham, who prepared the typescript.

Stephen K. Bailey
Francis U. Macy
Donn F. Vickers

ALTERNATIVE PATHS TO THE HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

CHAPTER I

The Regional Learning Service

A Regional Learning Service is a new way of opening educational opportunities to those for whom existing educational arrangements are either forbidding or foreclosed. It does not grant diplomas; its purpose is to supplement, not replace, existing school systems. Local educational leaders play a key role in fashioning the design for a Regional Learning Service. They, together with civic associates in business, labor, and cultural institutions, determine the policies and directions of the new agency.

The task is to reach out to those turned-out, or turned-off, by traditional programs of study, and support and advise them along the route to their own self-determined educational and career goals. The task is also to coordinate and make available to the alienated the currently ignored or under-utilized educative resources throughout an area.

A Regional Learning Service, such as the one established in Central New York, has two essential purposes. The first is to assist alienated high-school-age young people, as well as searching adults, to identify through counseling, testing, and field-based experiences their own realistic goals for education and work. The second is to provide these individuals with a variety of flexible learning options in educational institutions and in the community that can lead to a local high school or state diploma as well as to post-secondary educational and career opportunities.

The Learning Consultant

The key person in the life of each individual learner would be the Learning Consultant. Drawn from a variety of educational and career backgrounds, these part-time, salaried educational counselors would be selected to ensure their availability to students at many places throughout the

region being served. Their chief responsibility should be to develop a strong supportive relationship with the learners and then to stay with them throughout the process of goal setting, learning, evaluating, and final-diploma validating.

A relationship might evolve like this. A veteran is just back from Vietnam with a substantial number of high school credits embellished by service-connected training. Highly motivated, this individual wants to know how to get an evaluation of his "scattered units" and to complete what is necessary for high school.

After approaching RLS, the veteran is assigned a learning consultant who reviews his high school transcripts. Courses pursued under military auspices are also assessed to determine credit value as recommended by the Committee on Accreditation of Service Experiences of the American Council on Education. The learning consultant can then administer diagnostic tests to establish the veteran's level of ability in each of the basic areas of competency required by the External High School Diploma (described in the next chapter). With the results of diagnostic instruments in front of them, the learning consultant and the veteran together will be able to identify the next appropriate learning experiences.

Close contact will be maintained throughout the period of this tailor-made learning program. Final preparation for examinations would be thoroughly explored and determined. It should be noted in this particular case that contact with the learner might cover a relatively short period of time (e.g., six to eight months).

Another example illustrates how the learning consultant can offer a different set of supportive services. A woman in her mid-30's returns to work to supplement her family's income. With unhappy memories of her high school, which she left in her freshman year, she remembers mostly failures, reading difficulties, and social embarrassment. But, in order to find a job that will be more personally rewarding as well as more financially satisfactory, she now wants to obtain the high school diploma.

A woman learning consultant who herself has encountered similar life experiences would likely be assigned to this person, whose situation is not uncommon. Issues of

identity, self-worth, and institutional cynicism might well dominate the early contacts between consultant and learner. This would begin a long supportive association for a learner who, without substantial support and encouragement, might find her educational goals unattainable.

Initial rapport once established between this learner and her consultant, they must determine her present level of proficiency in high school work. The consultant might want to make use of a verbal aptitude test, such as the *Quick Word Test*, to secure important data on verbal ability. Further, it might be helpful to use a basic skill test designed for adults, such as the *Adult Basic Learning Examination*. Another is the *Stanford Test of Academic Skills*, which contains three measures: one in reading, one in English, and one in arithmetic.

In this situation as well as many others, tests have to be used sparingly and with utmost sensitivity. Basic to the entire counseling system is an environment of respect for the great variety of human experiences that characterize those who will come to the Regional Learning Service. Tests with a high degree of cultural bias have often damaged the self-esteem and motivation of the individual learner. A system which purports to humanize and individualize the learning process cannot afford that mistake.

Progressing into the identification of learning options, the learning consultant aids the woman in locating suitable evening courses. But, more importantly, she intervenes with the woman's employer to permit her to join other RLS clients at that company in a remedial math and bookkeeping course given by the training division on company time.

These are only two examples of the many kinds of problems which will need to be dealt with by the learning consultants. Essentially, they must be prepared to confront all the personal issues that surround the educational aspirations and experiences of the external student.

Students enrolled in non-traditional degree programs will need a non-traditional guidance and support system. People who have left formal education without earning a diploma can be expected, when they return to planned learning experiences, to share the educational difficulties common to many adults now in continuing education pro-

grams. Foremost among these problems are lack of confidence, inadequate study skills, inability to make appropriate choices from wide educational options, unrealistic expectations, and impatience with the apparent irrelevance of some of the studies in life and job. The educational problems of the external student are often inter-related with other vocational and emotional problems, particularly for those who have experienced failure or frustration in formal education.

In addition to providing the expected educational advising, the counselors must be skilled in counseling, in self-exploration leading to realistic occupational and educational goal setting, and in promoting the development of self-assurance in academic work. To achieve these goals, the counselors, where the case load permits, should meet with clients, preferably in informal settings conducive to the establishment of effective counseling relationships.

Psychological and social support should be maintained throughout the period of external study. Small group sessions, short-term counseling contracts, and other variations on the traditional counseling session should be undertaken to provide a highly differentiated service which is responsive to the life styles and individual needs of a wide diversity of clients.

The learning consultants, therefore, would need to work closely with the clients to:

- identify long-range educational and occupational goals
- assess standing in relation to these goals
- discover the variety of courses and other learning options throughout the region
- select regional, state-wide, and national examinations relevant to their academic progress
- evaluate the probable academic worth of units, credits, and life experiences that might be translated into diploma or degree-related terms
- advocate on behalf of the learner before appropriate schools, college boards, and agencies to ensure the maximum credit allowance for learning experiences
- ensure an on-going process of evaluation and goal reformulation.

The learning consultant role is complex and demanding. It will require mature persons with varied educational and career backgrounds. The selection process, itself, is carefully designed so as to ensure the recruitment of the right people for this new educational counseling function.

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Selection of Learning Consultants

Discover those persons who are already identified by their peers as "helping people." A system of peer recommendations and self-selection should be developed in industry, educational institutions, community organizations, churches, and other places where potential learning consultants can be found. It is of utmost importance that the consultants represent a wide variety of ages, races, and life styles likely to be present within the client group.

The criteria for selection of the natural counselor can be established by surveying a wide variety of people within the area to be served by the Regional Learning Center and asking them to describe the person whom they consult regarding problems on the job, in their family, and in the community. Results from this informal conversational survey can then be assessed, along with the more formalized reports from those involved in education of counselors and/or research related to counselor effectiveness. The outcome of these explorations might produce a description of the relevant personality characteristics of the learning consultant. This profile combines the insights of people who have the actual life experience of turning to someone when they have problems as well as the more systematic reflection of researchers and academicians. The description suggests certain personal, interpersonal, social, and cognitive abilities that are important to the personality of the helping person.

Potential learning consultants might be appraised in three distinct situations: written application to get some indication of the person's level of self-perception; personal interview designed to check out the applicant's style and ability in relation to the personality characteristics men-

tioned above; and group interview in which discussion and role-play techniques would be used. Four persons typical of learning service clients might observe the group interview and then participate in an evaluation of the potential learning consultants.

The Training Program

A training program of several months for future learning consultants would need to precede the opening of RLS doors. This program would be designed to give certain performance competencies to the learning consultants. A preliminary description of the abilities necessary for the role of learning consultant would include at least the following:

- ability to respond effectively to personal problems as they affect the learner's educational experience and to make appropriate referrals
- ability to assist the learners in establishing long-range and short-range goals and objectives
- ability to use appropriate diagnostic and evaluative instruments
- ability to demonstrate a working knowledge of regional educational institutions—their courses, special programs, requirements, and costs
- ability to work with a client to develop a prescription for learning and select appropriate learning options
- ability to assess a client's background of experiences for assignment of credit
- ability to direct the client toward appropriate tests and examining procedures
- ability to prepare and maintain a student profile
- ability to involve appropriate persons such as teachers, parents, and on-site workers in the counseling of students.

Throughout the training program there should be a conscious attempt to develop the understanding and interpersonal skills of the potential learning consultants. The training sessions themselves should be a laboratory for this

kind of personal growth. The experience will need to include actual practice in working with small groups as well as on a one-to-one basis. Video-taping, role-playing, and various human relations exercises may be typical training methods. Creating a sense of mutual support and responsibility among the members of the group should be emphasized. The effectiveness of the learning consultants depends greatly on the development of such a supportive style.

Participants in the Training

Together with the part-time, community-based learning consultants, four people from the Regional Learning Service staff would be part of the training program. Including this group ensures first-hand contact between those in administrative positions and those with the actual experience of relating to students. Also, details of the organization and style of the learning consultant network will evolve from the training program and it is important that administrative persons share in that process.

Another group, six educational counselors employed in secondary and higher educational institutions, would be selected to take part in the training. Establishing and maintaining a link with professionals already working in the field of educational counseling is important. Not only will this contact reduce the misunderstanding that might otherwise develop, it will be an opportunity to learn from them and to build on the experience of those who have struggled with the counseling process within educational institutions. The educational counselors themselves should benefit from the training program and, therefore, return to their institutions better able to influence the effectiveness of what goes on inside guidance centers.

After the training, the six counselors would be employed as learning consultants on a part-time basis to ensure an internal-external linkage. Further, the continued relationship of paraprofessional and professional counselors in subsequent staff development meetings will con-

tinue to have positive effects on the personal growth and professional skills of those from each group.

22 The Centralized Support Service

While the learning consultants themselves are the key persons in the lives and programs of individual learners, both learning consultant and student will need backup support service. For example, specialists will assist in developing work-study and other field-related experiences, in supervising career and educational testing and evaluation, in providing updated resources on occupational trends, and in maintaining information on financial aid. Two major services deserve special description:

1. EDUCATIONAL FACILITATION SYSTEM. If the counseling function of the Regional Learning Service is to enable the student to understand who he is and where he wants to go, the facilitating service enables him to discover how and where he can learn what he needs in order to achieve his goals.

Central to this function would be two computerized information banks: first, an Educational Resource Directory (EDR), which would contain information on all resources, whether school-based or out-of-school; second, a Regional Instructional Reserve (RIR), which would provide a talent bank of tutors approved by academic panels. With the information on learning options and tutors retrieved from ERD and RIR through computer terminals throughout the region, the learning consultants would assist clients in packaging individualized educational programs specifically designed to meet their own goals and life circumstances.

The RLS learning consultant should be able to give the learner reliable information of the following kind:

- the title, number, content description, and time and place of meeting, prerequisites, and cost of all credit and non-credit courses relevant to the needs of the learner offered by educational institutions (public, private, and proprietary) in the region

- list of in-service training courses given in the region by business, industry, professional organizations, labor unions, and such community resources as art galleries and libraries, together with information about cost, time, and place and relevance to available diploma and degree programs
- bibliographies, study guides, home study materials, correspondence courses, TV courses, computer-assisted exercises, cassettes, syllabi, learning modules related to the learner's flexible study needs
- names, addresses, telephone numbers, and fees of faculty-approved tutors who are accepted for the Regional Instructional Reserve (RIR) to work with learners in person, by telephone, and/or by correspondence
- names, addresses, places of work, and telephone numbers of other learners in the region who have embarked on independent study similar to those selected by the learner, together with places and times in the community or at work where they might meet together for mutual support.

The facilitative service of the RLS would enable the learner who has made some personal determination about his own educational-occupational goals to discover the resources most likely to facilitate their achievement.

2. VALIDATION SYSTEM. The support services described above find ultimate meaning in a comprehensive area-wide system (detailed in Chapter 2) of academic assessment and validation. It includes existing mechanisms for validating high school level proficiency but goes beyond them. Projected is an External Diploma that will validate the academic accomplishments of students who for reasons of age, work schedule, or life style find traditional educational routes unavailable or hostile.

Representatives of cooperating educational institutions in the area can be mobilized by the RLS staff to provide rigorous but flexible assessments of non-traditional educational performances and achievements. Assessment panels may construct special exams, assay the academic meaning of work experience, or review and evaluate artistic products or performances. These panels would then

make credit and unit recommendations to local school authorities and/or to the state education department. The authorities would use these assessments in making the final decisions to award the non-traditional student's achievements with the validating crown of the external diploma.

Administration

The Regional Learning Service will be related and responsive to the official educational authorities in the region. For example, in New York State, policy direction of school districts is now vested in elected school boards that have broad decision-making authority within the framework of state law and the regulations of the Board of Regents and State Education Department. Most school boards participate in Boards of Cooperating Educational Services, BOCES, which provide to students in one or two counties educational facilities and services not available in individual districts. At the five-county regional level, cooperation is planned and carried out by an unofficial voluntary association called the Elementary and Secondary Education Council (informally known as the Joint Management Team – JMT). To sustain broader contacts in the community, there should also be an advisory council composed of representatives from education, business, labor, the arts, and social agencies.

As the Learning Service demonstrates that it can provide new educational opportunities, start-up costs of the operation must be supported by developmental grants from government agencies and foundations. In the long run, of course, the continuing costs of the RLS service must be assumed by the individuals, institutions, and agencies benefitted.

CHAPTER II

The External High School Diploma

High school students throughout the country face a paradox. They are offered a widening range of study programs: mini-courses, extra science units, specialized literature courses, work-study programs. At the same time, diploma requirements have become increasingly rigid and prescriptive.[1]

A student in New York can, for example, seek any one of three alternative diplomas.[2] The majority of school-age students receive a diploma from their home school. Some of these students also receive the Regents Diploma as a state endorsement of their school diploma.

For most young dropouts and adults with interrupted high school educations, however, it is arduous or impossible to spend the class time required to accumulate the necessary units for a school diploma. They have one alternative in the state Equivalency Diploma, but only a small fraction of those lacking a diploma take the equivalency route.

After two years of intensive investigation into educational needs and opportunities in Central New York, the Policy Institute of SURC recommended that a new validation be established: the Regents External High School Diploma.

The purpose of creating a new diploma is to introduce more flexibility and individuality in required content and means of assessment in order to allow for educational development along personally meaningful lines. Although

[1] Parents, confused and distressed by teenage life styles, behavior, and motivations, turn to the schools to provide the non-academic guidance and training that seem increasingly difficult to apply at home. Parent pressures result in state regulations requiring, for example, course material on alcoholism, drugs, highway safety, fire prevention, patriotism, and humane treatment of animals for the high school diploma.

[2] For regulations governing the awarding of high school diplomas, see Appendix.

each external diploma would represent in one sense a unique achievement, it would be conferred as recognition of the completion of a demanding and rigorous program of study. The overall objectives of every student's learning program would conform to high academic standards agreed upon by top education officials in the region and state.

Existing Systems of Validation

In most states, diplomas are based upon the successful completion of locally designed and administered courses of study which satisfy certain minimum content requirements established by the state legislature, board of regents, and commissioner of education. The authority to certify completion of such "approved" courses of study is usually delegated totally to local school boards. But the school boards, in effect, accept the recommendations of school principals who have the most to say about whether students in their schools have earned a diploma.

In sum, both assessment and validation are centralized state functions in the case of the equivalency diploma. By contrast, the proposed External Diploma would be based on centralized validation by the state but the assessment of qualifying academic performance would be decentralized to communities. In essence, educational judgments would be made on the local level, permitting more humanized techniques of evaluating an individual's learning and skills.

Proposed System of Validation for the External Diploma

Some may assume that a totally new validating system would be required by an External Diploma Program. This is not the case. Certified teachers and specially qualified outsiders, working individually or on panels, would judge student skills and/or portfolios of accomplishment. Primary reliance could be placed upon local educators to de-

termine how well candidates meet the external diploma criteria.

An External Diploma Program should tap into existing local educational administrative machinery. How, then, would an individual become an external diploma candidate and earn his certification? The process would not have to be complicated. An external diploma candidate, not enrolled or registered with a particular high school, could turn to the Regional Learning Service, to a district superintendent, or to a regional committee for external secondary education.

The Regional Learning Service would assist him to estimate what further preparation he needs to meet the requirements of the external diploma and to plan the additional learning experiences needed.

The local assessment committee would approve his educational plan and, in due time, assess how adequately he has completed it. If satisfied with his performance, the committee would recommend the student to the state commissioner of education for validation by diploma.

To the approved candidate, the state education department would award an external diploma.

Requirements for the External Diploma

Until recently, there has been general agreement on what constitutes an "educated person" at the high school diploma level. The Carnegie Unit System became, for most secondary schools in the nation, the basic standard of accomplishment: 18 units taken over three or four years and including a prescribed number of courses in English, mathematics, science, and social studies.

The Carnegie system is now on the defensive, vulnerable to charges that its prescriptions are too highly structured to allow for the interests, talents, learning styles, and life styles of the wide variety of individuals who are subjected to it. Educators are beginning to question whether "so much of this and so much of that subject matter in

definable dosages . . . administered within a set, standardized time frame" is really adequate to meet today's needs.

Until widespread norms are developed as substitutes for the Carnegie Unit System, questions of requirements and curricula for an externally earned diploma must, of course, involve some consensus among local and state educational authorities. Most certainly, there must be agreement on "minimum competencies" to which a quality high school diploma should attest.

As a first step toward the establishment of a defensible minimum standard, the following suggested requirements are proffered as a starting point for discussion. Before a student qualifies for an external diploma, minimum capacities in four areas would be required.

BASIC SKILLS. *Achievement of a minimum level of reading and computation skills as measured by criterion referenced tests; ability to communicate effectively, in writing or through some combination of writing and other visual media* (e.g., painting, dramatic performance) or through speech or some other aural medium (e.g., musical composition or performance).

The requirement for some absolute minimum level of reading and math skills is the only "inflexible" s[illegible]dard included in the suggested requirements. In a very real way, it is a requirement for the educational system as well as individual students. Based on the assumption that such skills are indeed "basic," it means that the system can make no claim to provide an "education" if it cannot give its students these fundamental tools.

In contrast to the absolute nature of the requirements for reading and computation skills, the suggested standard for communication skills allows for recognition of talents and achievements other than the traditionally-emphasized ability to write. This is intended as a recognition of two facts:

(1) While the communication of thoughts, intentions, and feelings on paper is extremely important in human society and, therefore, must be minimally mastered by all students, it is not the only medium of communication and is not always the most effective or

appropriate medium. Those with talents and skills for other means of communication may be equally qualified for "recognition" by society's validating machinery;

(2) Technological developments have made the ability to communicate in writing less relevant to many people's lives than skills in expressing oneself orally (in English or some "foreign" language including mathematical symbols) or in one or another of the artistic media.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: *Knowledge in several fields of learning considered important to the individual's entry into the larger community in which he will live his life.* Some judicious admixture of the following fields is essential: language, math, science, social science, and the humanities. An individualized program of study must be made appropriate both in nature and in content—as well as in standards of achievement—to a student's goals, interests, and capacities.

Courses prescribed in order to give each student the elements of a well-rounded education too often result in an education consisting of artificially compartmentalized sets of facts and perspectives with little relation to each other or to any person's "real life." Some fortunate students with well-developed skills of synthesis and analysis undoubtedly find bits and pieces that serve their intellectual curiosities and practical aspirations; a great many others, just as undoubtedly, are bewildered, uninterested, and cynically marking time.

The general knowledge aspect of the proposed requirements allows for interdisciplinary learning experiences that are worth credit across a range of subject areas; for the tailoring of learning experiences in each subject area to the larger educational goals of each student; and for recognition of the validity of various types of knowledge in science, sociology, literature, economics, politics, or whatever, as alternatives to traditional courses in such fields.

The inclusion of language and mathematics in the "general knowledge" requirements is not a repetition of the "basic skills" requirements. Rather, it is a requirement that the levels achieved and the content covered in these

areas be appropriate to each student's individualized curriculum. For example, if a student intends to go to college, the "minimum levels" in reading and math will probably not be adequate for his other learning experiences or for college admission. If a student has charted a course for himself in a business profession, he will have to know something more about business communications and computations than would be required as "basic skills." A student with literary or journalistic aspirations will have reading and writing experiences not necessarily relevant to other students.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SKILLS: *Knowledge of the individual and social consequences of personal and group behavior, including the knowledge of how individuals and groups relate to political institutions and processes in the American system.* Such knowledge should be appropriate to the student's goals, interests, and capacities.

A sophisticated understanding of social and political forces begins, not with textbook learning, but with heightened personal perceptions of behavioral consequences. The internalization of behavioral propositions in "If–then" terms is the key to living a wise, prudent, and joyful life. "*If* a young person gets hooked on hard drugs, *then* the likely consequences for him and for society are . . . ." "*If* a society is marked by vast economic injustices, *then* the probable consequences for domestic tranquillity are . . . ."

The competent and constructive citizen is one who has internalized behavioral consequences and has learned the art of using the machinery of politics and government to effect changes in public policy that accord with his views of the public interest.

PERSONAL AND CAREER PLANNING SKILLS: *Ability to identify alternative futures–both in occupational and personal terms–and to select among these.* This assumes preparation for the practical pursuit of selected goals, a job, or further training. The requirement relates to HEW Assistant Secretary Marland's emphasis upon career education–"coping" skills in both vocational and avocational terms.[1]

Making each and all of these requirements tangible and concrete in individual student terms will be a challenge both to pupils and to learning consultants of the Regional Learning Service. It will take a flexible and pioneering attitude on the part of educators charged with assessing and validating educational experiences. But, tackled aggressively, this kind of individualized shift away from the rigidities of the Carnegie Unit System can provide the basis for educational experiences of far greater personal and social worth than those permitted by the narrow academic strictures of the present.

Curriculum for the External Diploma

How could more flexible requirements be translated into specific curricula for the external student? Here are some of the many possibilities.

LEARNING SITUATIONS. In setting up individual programs for completing high school, students could experiment with widely-diverse types of learning situations or select one or two which suited them particularly. One student might choose to combine an on-the-job learning situation with classes two nights a week in the local school's adult education program. Another might contract with a tutor for one element of his curriculum, volunteer as a staff aide in a political organization for another, enroll in a class at a nearby college and independently prepare himself for taking one or more of the available qualifying exams.

Some highly-directed students might prefer to work for the most part on their own, through correspondence courses, independent research projects, courses of study utilizing programed instruction materials and the like. Others might prefer group learning situations. These could be found in classes at local high schools and colleges. Courses of academic value are also available under private

[1] Sidney P. Marland, Jr., "Career Education Now," NASSP *Bulletin*, Vol. 55, May 1971, pp. 1-11.

and community auspices in commercial, vocational, technical, and professional schools, industrial and trade union training programs, YMCA, music and drama institutes, museums, etc.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES. Subject content and the credit value of learning experiences could vary as widely as the possibilities for learning situations. In the following examples, communications and computational skills could be demonstrated through written reports and/or oral and multi-media presentations of findings and experiences:

A student interested in health could learn much in the areas of sociology, economics, health, biology, and political science through study of public health needs and organization of medical and nutritional services in his community. He might conduct independent research, work in a public health agency, join a formal seminar, or create a student task force.

A student interested in drugs would learn elements of chemistry, health, biology, sociology, and political science through supervised study of addiction problems and programs in his community.

A student interested in working in business or at a trade could expand his knowledge in science and in math under the imaginative guidance of a tutor drawing on job experience.

Evaluation for the External Diploma

Adequate tools and methods for evaluation are available. The problem is to define which products or performances to assess and to select appropriate evaluation tools for particular learning experiences.

Self-evaluation, peer evaluation, evaluation by qualified persons and examinations are each applicable to some types of external learning experiences. Many standard examinations are available for such purposes (e.g., sections of the GED, college level placement and exemption exams, "final" and "semester" exams used in local high schools, occupational skills tests). Alternatively, special-

ized exams can be devised to accommodate individual cases. Job experiences can be evaluated by consultation between job supervisors and evaluators appointed by an assessment committee. Other "proofs" of learning could be "products" of specific experiences such as written reports and examples of applied skills and talents (works of art, crafts, inventions, performances, and demonstrations).

Another avenue of evaluation is the rapidly increasing number of courses based on "continuous progress" in which periodic evaluation plays an integral role in the instructional process. Sophisticated developments in educational technology make this option available to more and more students in both external and traditional programs.

A valuable part of the student's learning will be his participation in the selection and careful definition of appropriate means of evaluation for each experience. He will have assistance in this process from his RLS learning consultant. But the learning consultant will not judge whether the standards set in the guidelines for the external diploma have been satisfactorily met by his students. That judgment is the responsibility of the local assessment committee which would certify successful completion of requirements to the state education department for the formal awarding of the External High School Diploma.

CHAPTER III

The Target Populations

Who needs a Regional Learning Service and an External Diploma Program?

Despite many successes, especially in college preparation, most of the educators consulted by the Policy Institute in Central New York agree that their institutions and diploma programs cannot satisfy all the educational needs of important portions of the school age youth and adults they serve. While no new program can meet everyone's needs, the designers of the Regional Learning Service are convinced that a substantial number of the educationally alienated would be well served by the intensive counseling and the wide range of flexible educational alternatives that the RLS proposes to facilitate.

Reasons for this confidence can be found in the profiles of several separate, though necessarily overlapping, categories of potential clients.

Adults

The most numerous and important group from which Central New York's RLS would expect to draw clients is composed of the large number of adults who have not completed high school.[1] Interviews with employers and educators as well as with adults without diplomas indicate that many of these clients find the existing opportunities for adult day and night classes too distant, too rigid, too threatening, or too patronizing for their needs and tastes. Many are discouraged by negative experiences with unfamiliar paper-and-pencil test instruments such as the

[1] More than 40% of all Americans over the age of 22 do not have high school diplomas. In Central New York the figure is 43% for those over 25.

GED examinations required for the high school equivalency diploma.

Flexible scheduling, self-study programs, and child care are important concerns to adults who would further their education. An external diploma opportunity would encourage many without diplomas to seek certification through local assessment of their capabilities. The external learning possibilities facilitated by RLS would tap a large reservoir of adults who otherwise would settle for their present educational status. An important attraction will be the ability of RLS learning consultants to counsel them on the scholastic worth of the work and life experiences they have accumulated since leaving school. The process of assembling and evaluating the "credits" they have earned on their own would be an important educational experience in itself, imparting a new sense of their capacities and the incentive to complete a diploma program.

Veterans

An important group of adult learners are veterans. They are uniquely entitled, by law, to educational benefits. Veterans Administration officials, however, are concerned about their reluctance to fit into traditional educational structures.

Of 5,000,000 men discharged from the armed services between August 1964 and June 1971, roughly 750,000 lack high school credentials. Only one in six of these has participated or is now participating in education and training under the G.I. Bill.

Charles A. Stenger of the V.A. has identified five distinctive characteristics which he calls a descriptive profile of today's veterans: an assertive response to authority; an expectation that authority will press him to conform regardless of his personal feelings and wishes; a sense of uncertainty and pessimism about the future, resulting in concentration on immediate gratification – the NOW phenomenon; an intense positive identification with his own age group against the "establishment"; and a tendency to

"act out"—to exercise uncertain control over emotions and feelings.

A learning consultant of RLS, perhaps a veteran, would know the V.A.'s regulations backwards and forwards, as well as all of the educational alternatives the community had to offer. With the energy and the tact to deal with troubled and even defiant people, he could serve V.A. offices in breaching the attitudinal walls that have kept scores of local veterans from taking advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

Minorities

A great deal has been written in recent years about the educational deprivation of the urban disadvantaged, blacks in particular. The slow improvement in their educational welfare makes the problem a continuing national concern.

Statistics and first hand observations indicate that blacks figure prominently in each of the general client "categories." They are among the young dropouts, among the high school students searching for stimulation in the present and security in the future, and among the older adults wishing to resume their abbreviated educations.

For younger blacks who have left school, intensive remedial work in basic skill areas and job and career counseling are very important. Older black clients have the same constraints on their time and resources as do all adult clients who are parents and breadwinners. A higher proportion, however, could be expected to depend on public assistance, transportation, and child care.

Across the nation, the problem of educating the non-English speaking is a grim and continuing issue. The failure of many Puerto Ricans in New York City and many Chicanos in the American Southwest to complete high school is associated with their basic bilingual problem. More flexible educational programs, many of them out of school and all of them involving highly skilled diagnostic therapeutic counseling, are needed if the learning difficulties of non-English speaking people are to be overcome.

Rural Disadvantaged

One-third of all rural Americans comprise the rural poor, and they represent approximately 46 percent of all poor people in the nation. For many of these, inadequate counseling services and inaccessibility in winter to adult education courses present barriers to further study. The decentralized service of the RLS, combined with a greater variety of independent study programs, might well offer new hope for rural learners.

Dropouts and Potential Dropouts

The discussion of target populations has so far focused on people beyond school age. Those 21 and under, in and out of school, form another important group.

One-fourth of all high school students in the country drop out each year, and the prognosis for the future is dismal. For example, school officials in Syracuse, N.Y., estimate that 10-30 percent of the students in grades 7-12 exhibit the characteristics of potential dropouts described in a 1972 study of programs for potential dropouts.[1]

- inability to read at grade level and pattern of failure
- withdrawal from extracurricular activities
- disruption in classroom
- frequent absenteeism
- weak peer relationships in school
- emotional disturbances related to home environment.

While a review of experience throughout the nation uncovers few long-term, large-scale successes in the history of dropout prevention and rehabilitation, progress that has been recorded seemed to occur when special programs responded specifically to the needs implied in the foregoing dropout profile. One important key seems to lie in counseling.

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[1] *Dropouts: Prevention and Rehabilitation* (Arlington, Va.: National School Public Relations Association), 1972.

Without denigrating the work of present school counselors, who are usually overburdened with a wide variety of counseling and administrative tasks, one is forced to conclude that most potential dropouts cannot enjoy trusting and intensive counseling services in existing school systems. Many students in trouble avoid their counselors. They cannot be sure their discussions with counselors will not be reported to school and community authorities for disciplinary and other purposes except in Michigan, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, which have recently enacted laws prohibiting the forced release of information that students share with counselors or school psychologists. A comprehensive study of school counseling finds it impossible "for impoverished school systems to provide even career guidance, much less personal and academic counseling."

For those who have already left school, there are even fewer out of school counseling opportunities. The Regional Learning Service is designed to provide these services to the many thousands of both potential and actual dropouts.

Young Parents

Pregnancy and young parenthood are major causes for leaving school before graduation. The need to support young families is an important factor among male dropouts. Pregnancy is by far the most frequent cause of young girls' leaving school.

Opportunities for flexible scheduling and self-study programs are of particular importance to school-aged parents. Career, academic, and vocational counseling, informed by an awareness of immediate concerns with child care, health care, and employment, would be part of the services which the Regional Learning Service could bring to them.

For every high school student who signals disaffection with established institutions by dropping out, there is at least one counterpart who, while remaining to graduate, could be better served by more educational options. Those who know them best – the teachers, counselors, and administrators – confirm the need for a range of out-of-school alternatives to supplement available fare or substitute for it.

One principal, in arguing that he had 30 to 40 students who should get 75 to 100 percent of their educational experience outside of the traditional system, characterized them as "cut off from their parents, a drag on what the schools are trying to do generally, and a time burden to counselors, psychologists, and vice principals." One New York school district official claimed that 15 to 20 percent of his city's high school students cannot operate within the formal system, and that among them are students with greatly varying abilities and interests. To hard-pressed principals in America's great urban centers, 15 to 20 percent defined as "hostile" or "alienated" may seem remarkably low. However, the issue is not the precise statistic of those "turned-off" by the structures and the organizations of the schools, but rather the reality of the problem and the need to construct ways of providing educational services to them.

The high schools have responded to problems of restlessness, boredom, and "senioritis" by developing "accelerated," "advance placement," and "enrichment" programs for the unchallenged, understimulated, and unorthodox students. Most of these are conducted at school and permit little out-of-school experience and exposure that can significantly motivate students.

Other target groups include handicapped students, drug rehabilitation participants, and children of migrant workers.

Summary

The designers of the Regional Learning Service believe that high school education can be made more individually worthwhile to both school-age youth and adults. Strong candidates for RLS services are students who seemingly have no particular interests and students whose burgeoning interests are difficult, if not impossible, to accommodate in existing programs.

Many students would be able to use the RLS as a source of appropriate supplements to their regular high school programs and still receive their school diploma. For those students whose interests and motivations are best suited to a pace, style, and schedule wholly outside the traditional high school, a full-fledged external program would provide learning opportunities that could lead to certification by either a high school diploma or the proposed external diploma.

Adults could combine their learning experiences with the aim of earning either the high school equivalency or the new external diploma. For all categories of students, the RLS would open up a broad new range of validated educational opportunities and provide the counseling and facilitating services necessary for taking purposeful advantage of them.

CHAPTER IV

Community Resources for Learning

Resources for learning—human resources, cultural resources, and institutional and physical resources—are abundant in most areas of the country; but they are largely ignored by the formal system of education. A Regional Learning Service would be an instrument to incorporate these resources into the educational program of all students. Nothing could be more important in stimulating the interest, exciting the imagination, and ultimately enriching the lives of those who are disassociated from traditional schools.

Human Resources

It goes without saying that the key element in a successful external learning program will be the human beings who relate their talents to the emotional and intellectual needs of learners. Besides the network of learning consultants of the proposed Regional Learning Service, a people talent bank is available to serve as group and individual tutors. Willing talent is copiously available; much of it outside of the schools. Tutors can be found on the staffs of local schools and colleges and also among faculty spouses, advanced graduate students, retired teachers, talented housewives, and other "natural pedagogues" skilled in their occupational fields.

The tutors can be screened and approved by a panel of local educators. In contrast to certified teachers, the tutors would not establish standards or validate performance. Rather, they would assist students to pursue approved educational programs in preparation for validation by local education authorities.

FUNCTIONS OF A TALENT BANK. An automated information system is needed for aligning learners and instructional talent and for maintaining data on availability, effectiveness, and cost accounting. A computerized talent bank, the "Regional Instructional Reserve," should have the capability to:

- provide up-to-date information for learning consultants and students about locations and qualifications of available instructors
- provide current information to administrative personnel in RLS on the use and evaluation feedback of individual instructors
- provide the data for accounting and record keeping
- facilitate basic research on the instruction-learning process.

Any information system is only as good as its maintenance. Simple machine-processable forms should be developed with initial and subsequent entry into the computer files, along with retrieval routines that require minimal training. These simple forms and routines should exist for every facet of the system, should not be redundant, and should involve minimal effort on the part of the user to complete and to interpret. On-going inputs will include new talent and corrections to current files regarding temporary unavailability, change of address, telephone number, change in status, additions of subject matter eligible to teach, changes in current interests, priorities, etc.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE TALENT BANK. The following steps are seen as essential in developing the Regional Instructional Reserve: criterion determination and planning; identifying, locating, assessing, and recruiting instructional talent; evaluating instructional performance; computer processing of information about available talent.

CRITERION DETERMINATION. A number of questions should be answered before criteria for tutor selection are established. How much weight should be given to work experience, academic credentials, demonstrated skills? How much time should the candidate be able to give? Should recommendations by associates be required? Should candidates be interviewed?

Answers to such questions would depend in part upon whether the tutor is expected to train the student to function in the position he currently holds. Would he instruct the basics and the tricks of his trade as he knows them, or would he provide the students with a prescribed content that may parallel existing high school courses?

IDENTIFYING, LOCATING, AND RECRUITING TALENT. There are two basic approaches to this part of the RLS responsibility: recruitment through existing manpower reservoirs and self-selection. Mailings and advertisements can be directed to the following types of potential tutors:

- instructors of secondary and post-secondary courses in both academic and business programs
- members of teacher and other professional organizations (e.g., architects)
- alumni of schools of education
- retired school and college faculty members
- active and retired librarians.

EVALUATION OF STAFF PERFORMANCE. Continuing performance evaluations would be based both on "in-put" and "out-put" evidence: in-put evidence to include statements or records about the tutor's background and paper qualifications, and out-put evidence to include pupil comments and/or performance after working with tutor. Such information stored in computer files would be of substantial help in relating student need to available instructional talent. Rather than asking the question: "Is Instructor X effective?" the issue becomes "With whom, i.e., with which kinds of students, is Instructor X effective?"

COMPUTER PROCESSING. Basically the computer file would hold information about the instructor, indicating his name-address-home/office telephone number, conditions of availability, resource subject matter, and other pertinent information. The computer would then be programed with an accumulation of additional information associated with a given tutor—especially evaluation and activity data needed for payment, pupil guidance, and rehiring.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources in the community can play an integral role in secondary education programs. They rarely do. Most cities have professionally staffed cultural institutions but seldom can students receive high school credits for participating in their musical, art, or theatrical programs – although credit is often awarded for similar activities, at a less professional level, when directed by teachers within the school.

Consider for example, that in Syracuse, N.Y., out-of-school resources include the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, the Everson Museum (art), the Canal Museum (history), the Salt City Playhouse-Community Center for the Arts (dance, music, drama, visual arts), and the many programs of the Cultural Resources Council of Syracuse and Onondaga County. While these resources contribute in varying degrees to the education of the populace, only in very limited ways is participation in their activities recognized and credentialed as part of the education program of the city and its neighboring school districts. Those in charge of these activities would welcome their inclusion as part of an external diploma program. When the proposed Regional Learning Service is established, it will serve as a broker for students, helping them identify and reach these resources as well as achieve academic credit for skills acquired.

Institutional Resources

Institutions offer two kinds of valuable learning experiences: work in paid or voluntary jobs and structured study. Businesses, local government, and social agencies have cooperated with city school systems in the placement of students in work-study programs. The opportunities for students in suburban, small town, and rural areas, however, may be more limited. The challenge is to provide the student with real responsibility, job supervision, and instructional guidance so that he is not simply working, but

working and learning in a coherent and meaningful fashion. This requires close and repeated contact between the student, his supervisor, and his teacher or counselor. It is difficult for school personnel to find the time for such contacts.

Structured learning opportunities exist not only in the established schools but also out in the community where many corporations, trade unions, vocational institutes, professional associations, and social agencies conduct educational programs.

BUSINESS AND LABOR. Business, industry, labor, and professional associations provide to their employees and members a wide variety of educational programs at the secondary level. Many of the larger industries provide extensive educational programs, often in well-equipped training centers that would make many school principals envious. Many trade union apprenticeship programs are meritorious.

Successful completion of these courses of study cannot now be credited toward achievement of the high school diploma that many employees lack. Yet many of these courses appear equivalent to vocational education and language arts courses given in high schools. The RLS would be an instrument to obtain academic credit in these cases where warranted. With appropriate encouragement from the RLS, many of these programs might be opened up to external diploma students who are not employees or members of the associations.

LIBRARIES. Students in pursuit of the external diploma can benefit from libraries that maintain study materials and assist students in individual research and study projects. Many institutions of higher education maintain a fairly liberal policy with respect to the use of the library facilities by persons other than their own matriculated students. Surely with this general attitude, obtaining arrangements could be worked out by the RLS for the use of these library facilities by external diploma students.

Educative Space and Facilities

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An external diploma program requires adequate educative space and facilities for individual study, group meetings and learning materials. Suitable space for these purposes must be conveniently located for the students and low in cost. For example, churches and synagogues, schools, colleges and universities, municipal buildings, and community centers seldom fully utilize their space and can be persuaded to make it available for a good cause.

CHAPTER V

New Independent Learning Techniques

The needs of students who pursue their studies on an independent, non-traditional basis can increasingly be met by extraordinary advances in instructional technology. Many formal educational institutions have been slow to utilize the wonders of communication science that now abound. The lone teacher lecturing to rows of passive pupils is still all too common. Both the constraints and the flexibilities of non-traditional studies provide modern technology with unprecedented opportunities.

Learning materials for the student pursuing a high school diploma on an external basis already exist, of course, in the form of books, subject matter outlines, bibliographies, journals, course syllabi, laboratory manuals, films and film strips, and other standard paraphernalia of formal schooling. But the underlying assumption has been that such materials are closely tied to the formal role of a teacher in a classroom setting. When this assumption shifts to the notion of independent and/or small-group, flexible time/space study, learning materials must take on changed characteristics:

- They must be highly autonomous, in the sense that the learner may move ahead in comprehension and skill by himself with a minimum of additional instructional support;
- They must be usable in a wide variety of settings at times convenient to the learner.

Instructional Materials

Learning materials appropriate to an external diploma program already cover an extremely broad range and more

are produced each month.[1] With a commitment to maximize the individualization of instruction and curriculum, an External Diploma Program can probably never catalogue all of the available materials which might serve its students' needs and interests. One of the important services the program must offer, however, is the identification and, if necessary, the creation of the materials required to support the learning objectives of both knowledge and experience. Further, it must be able to provide information about where materials are available and how to use them.

Commercially prepared materials include a vast array of products—books, textbook series, films, audio and visual tapes, microforms, computer-assisted instruction, records. Simply keeping abreast of what is available in all of these forms can be a major task. Important assistance can be secured from various catalogues that have been published in recent years by a number of organizations. They can, to be sure, only serve an information function. Processing and assessment of the materials included in them will be required.

Traditional correspondence courses are assuming new modes. A large number of state universities and educational departments have for years conducted correspondence courses at the high school level. Such courses are a lonely way to learn and hard to sustain for the undermotivated and insecure. Recently, correspondence study students have been working in groups with counselors on such projects as the Supervised Independent Study Program in Bucks County, Pa. Elsewhere correspondence study has been coordinated with relevant programs on public tele-

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[1] *Sharper Tools for Better Learning* (Reston, Va.: National Association of Secondary School Principals), 1973.

Westinghouse Learning Directory indexes all forms of media under widely cross-referenced topic headings and includes information as to audience level, media, features, sources and prices. The National Information Center for Educational Media publishes a series of indexes including guides to films, filmstrips, video tapes, records and 8 mm cartridges. *Programmed Learning —A Bibliography of Programs and Presentation Devices* was published by the National Society for Programmed Instruction in 1967 and followed by four supplements.

vision. Others use tape cassettes as instructional devices.[2]

Locally prepared materials by teachers, students, civic groups, businesses and others are another important source. Workbooks, audio and video tapes, films, etc., are all produced in most areas and an external diploma program may be one framework in which their wider utility can be exploited.

Other Technological Developments

The emerging world of computer-assisted instruction,[3] two-way Cable TV, satellite transmission, video-tapes and platters, and a universe of educational audio-cassettes can enormously facilitate external learning. Here the great need is adequate "software"—distinguished program materials. One contribution of the external diploma program to the larger society could prove to be its demonstrated capacity to use constructively the new educational wonders of our technological age and to evaluate their learning effectiveness. Such a development could hasten the investment of private as well as public funds into improved educational delivery systems.

Summary

The concept of instructional technology includes far more than the glittering products of the communications revolution. Machines are only a part of the concept and less important that the techniques. A presidential commission appointed to study the implications of instructional technology defined it as a "systematic way of designing, carrying

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[2] See *Guide to Independent Study Through Correspondence Instruction*, National University Extension Association, Washington, D. C.; and *Directory of Independent Study Programs*, Educational Consultants, Inc., St. Louis, Mo.

[3] Warren Koch, *The Use of Computers in Instruction in Secondary Schools* (Washington, D. C.: The National Association of Secondary School Principals), 1972.

out, and evaluating the total process of learning and teaching in terms of specific objectives . . . and employing a combination of human and non-human resources [for] more effective instruction." [4] It is then basically a concept of instructional design which has been summarized as follows by Robert Glazer: [5]

- The setting of instructional goals will be recast in terms of observable and measurable student behavior including achievements, attitudes, motivations, and interests;
- The diagnosis of the learner's strengths and weaknesses prior to instruction will become a more definitive process so that it can aid in guiding the student along a curriculum specially suited to him;
- The techniques and materials employed by the teacher will undergo significant change; and
- The ways in which the outcomes of education are assessed, both for student evaluation and curriculum improvement, will receive increasingly more attention.

The growing adoption of methods of instructional technology in some schools has promoted among teachers the development of skills in defining behavioral objectives, programing instruction, and employing new approaches to measurement. Most pupil measuring devices have been geared in the past to group norms, which are inadequate in schools individualizing instruction. Children proceeding at their own pace need measuring instruments that determine where they stand in relation to their goals – not where they stand in relation to other members of the class or other persons of their age throughout the nation.[6] These new techniques progressively used for individualized learn-

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[4] Commission on Instruction Technology, *To Improve Learning*, A Report to the President and the Congress of the United States, March 1970. The Commission reported that "the present status of instructional technology in American education is low both in quantity and quality."

[5] Editor, *Teaching Machines and Programmed Learning* (Washington, D. C.: National Education Association), 1965.

[6] James W. Popham, ed., *Criterion-Referenced Measurement*, Education Technology, 1972.

ing in schools are extremely well suited to individualized learning out of school.

Those beyond the school walls need, sometimes desperately, the opportunity to establish their own specific learning objectives, to study through individualized instructional materials and experiences tailored to their objectives, and to be assessed in terms of their objectives. The state of the art in instructional technology permits its export from exemplary schools to those who have left the classroom in body or in spirit.

The Regional Learning Service would be capable of bringing the techniques and materials of instructional technology to the independent learner. It can be a catalytic agent working among all the educative resources in the community on behalf of the individual learner.

CHAPTER VI

Strategies For Action

The mortality rate for educational innovations is high. How then can we translate our ideas for change into an on-going expansion of educational opportunities? Chancellor Harvey Scribner of the New York public school system urges as a strategy, "Direct your energy on the public schools, because that is where the students are in large numbers and where they will be in large numbers for the foreseeable future."

> To those who believe in the value and necessity of alternatives in education, I say: Bring your influence to bear on the generation of alternatives within the public sector. There is every reason why public education systems should and must offer learning opportunities as widely diverse as the students who come to the schools by law. And there are many good reasons why these opportunities should include experiences beyond the schools as well as within them. [1]

If put into action, the Regional Learning Service would operate closely with the schools but not from within them. With a regional network of learning consultants flexible enough to advise students of all ages anywhere – in or out of school – and capable of connecting them with educational resources throughout the region, the RLS would have the freedom to perform student services which school personnel cannot now provide.

The projected External Diploma would be a program of the state system of education offering new options to students both in and out of school. Those who seek this diploma could pursue it through individual learning programs approved and assessed locally. A state education department, but not district school boards, will need to issue regulations formally establishing the diploma. A certification of non-traditional learning acceptable to em-

[1] Speech on "Alternatives in Education," April 10, 1972, New York University School of Education.

ployers and colleges is a key issue that would be resolved by the establishment of the state-awarded external diploma.

However, one fact should be clear at the outset. *The Regional Learning Service and the External Diploma are not designed mainly to decrease costs for society but to increase learning for the individual.* While saving people is the goal, one outcome may well be savings in social expenditures in the areas of education, welfare, and justice. For example, the St. Paul Open School has a per pupil cost less than city average. In Philadelphia, the Parkway Program's "School Without Walls" avoids expenditures on construction and maintenance of classroom structures by using the city itself as "school." Similar programs in Boston, New York, and Chicago utilize without charge the instructional skills of parents and many in business and cultural institutions.[2]

The External Diploma Program would entail lower per pupil costs for capital expenditures. The community offers an abundance of facilities without cost. Students in such a program will learn much from their supervisors and fellow workers, librarians, museum staff members, and others not in the pay of the program. Learning consultants and tutors will be part-time employees of the Regional Learning Service and, therefore, will not be given the usual fringe benefits which add 30-40 percent to school payroll billings.

Notwithstanding these financial benefits, it should not be assumed that instructional costs for all external students will necessarily be lower than for students in school full-time. Instructional costs vary with the student wherever he is. Handicapped children in special programs, for example, usually require a substantially higher than average expenditure. Students in the External Diploma Program with histories of academic failure will clearly need more intensive psychological and instructional support than can usually be provided in the schools. What can be said with

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[2] "Alternatives in Public Education: Movement or Fad," *The Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals*, Vol. 57, No. 374, Sept. 1973.

certainty is that the educational expenditures in an external program will show a higher percentage of direct costs for counseling and instruction than in a normal school budget. This should mean more learning per dollar invested.

A RLS cost accounting system must be set up to monitor the precise expenditure on direct student support and on overhead, respectively. There would be some start-up costs in the initial years of operation that would not recur. Furthermore, the small core staff of RLS, the administrators and specialists described in Chapter I, represents a sharply declining per pupil cost as the number of students in the program increases over the first several years.

The viability of the External Diploma Program as a means of expanding options to individual students depends ultimately upon support from state and local tax sources that undergird the public educational system. Some state education officials have stated that public funding of school-age students in an external program is administratively feasible, but details for each state would have to be worked out locally.

Performance objectives for the external high school diploma have been defined and criterion-referenced instruments for assessment suggested. The following competencies were defined in terms of skills and knowledge that could be demonstrated as observed behavior in contexts familiar and interesting to the diploma candidate:

Summary of Competencies for the New York State Regents External High School Diploma

A. General Competencies for Life Preparation
   1. Communication Skills
      a. Reception: reading, listening, viewing
      b. Expression: writing, speaking, non-verbal
   2. Computation Skills
      a. Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication, Division: Use with whole numbers, fractions, percentages and decimals
      b. Data Interpretation: statistics, graphs, charts

3. Life Skills and Knowledge
   a. Self-Awareness (health, aesthetic, self-concept, decision-making, group interaction)
   b. Social Awareness (citizenship)
   c. Consumer Awareness (purchase choices, personal finance, property maintenance)
   d. Scientific Awareness (application of concepts)
   e. Occupational Preparedness (career and education)

B. Individual Competencies for Career Preparation
   1. Competencies for Employment
   2. Competencies for Post-Secondary Study

These competencies were selected with recognition of the fact that a secondary program cannot be expected to provide life-time occupational skills in a period of rapid and poorly anticipated shifts in manpower requirements caused by accelerated technological change. These were chosen with a view to the need of individuals over the next 50 years to adjust to many changes in their environment and to choose repeatedly from a burgeoning array of occupations and life-styles.

The heart of the assessment system would be a network of learning assessors to include certified teachers and laymen capable of evaluating competencies in their fields of occupation and specialization. Certified teachers would be given responsibility for evaluating the achievement of required communication and computation skills. They would be recruited, selected, oriented, and monitored by a coordinator of learning assessment, whose job would include reviewing assessments, particularly in reading and mathematics, to ensure that criteria are applied in a consistent fashion.

The External Diploma Program is not designed to replace schools or compete with them, but rather to supplement them in opening more options for certification to those who are poorly accommodated by existing diploma programs.

Designers of the External Diploma Program have concluded that high school diplomas no longer meet the needs

of the recipients, of employers, and of administrators in post-secondary institutions. There are no absolute performance standards required. In practice, diplomas are awarded to students with a very wide range of abilities and knowledge. Those who drop out of high school before completing the fourth year or the required number of Carnegie Units have no official documentation of their competencies although they may read, for example, at a higher level than many who stick it out with low grades and receive the diploma in the spring of their fourth year.

For example, one-third of the graduates of high schools in New York State are unable to achieve a sufficiently high score on the General Educational Development (GED) tests to qualify for the New York State High School Equivalency Diploma. On the other hand, four-year high school graduates are generally at least exposed to a great deal more, especially in literature, social studies, and sciences, than is tested by the GED examinations.

Hence, the document and concept of "diploma" has many meanings. The competencies it reflects in given cases are usually unknown. Certain abilities of those who receive the External High School Diploma, however, would be known, since the diploma would be awarded for demonstration of specified competencies without regard to the place and the time of their acquisition. Nevertheless, many people concerned with the problem feel that there should be an additional state certification available to everyone, whether or not he has any diploma.

The official state document would certify to levels of performance in occupational as well as academic areas. It would state authoritatively and specifically what a person can actually do. The certificate could be issued to each high school graduate as a highly descriptive supplement to the diploma. It could be updated as new skills are acquired throughout life.

APPENDIX

Syracuse Work-Study and Vocational Education Programs

More than 1,000 students, or approximately one-quarter of the enrolled high school students in the Syracuse City School District were involved in some type of work-study program during the 1971-72 school year. The Syracuse Board of Education, and a number of other public and private agencies, have been particularly sensitive to the need for a variety of alternatives and second-chance opportunities for high school "turned-offs" and "dropouts."

First of all, there is a cluster of work-study programs (six in all) designed to meet the needs of high school students who are not relating well to the traditional academic track. Some of these options are occupationally-focused programs (e.g., the "Office Occupations Work Experience Program" and the "Sales Occupations Work Experience Program"). Students in these programs work an average of 15 hours a week and receive up to one unit of credit each school year (half credit for each 300 hours on the job).

There is a more general category, the "Vocational-Industrial Cooperative Diversified Occupations Program" that is intended to fill gaps in occupational areas in which there is no formal shop or laboratory facility within the school district (e.g., upholstering, nurses aides). Students in the second program spend a half of each day in school; the remainder of the day in a work setting. Participants can earn up to two units of credit each year (one credit for each 400 hours on the job).

Each of these occupationally-oriented programs involve students in at least one period each day of classroom instruction related to their fields of work. The coordinators of the programs are charged with arranging with employers to provide "adequate and varied on-the-job training."

For the most seriously disadvantaged and alienated, the true "potential dropout," there is the "General Work Experience Program" (GWEP) and the "School-Work Alternative Program" (SWAP). About half of the total work-study enrollment in the school district is accounted for by GWEP. Students in each of the city's four high schools participate in the program. The school

district has two "Occupational Resource Teachers" each of whom is responsible for coordinating GWEP in two high schools. They also serve as vocational counselors to students who are not interested in work-study credit. GWEP students work an average of 15 hours a week and may earn up to one unit of credit per year (half credit for each 200 hours of work). They attend a class for one hour each week dealing with "occupational orientation and guidance." The major thrust of the GWEP programs is keeping "disadvantaged" students in school. During its first year of operation (1970-71), only ten (out of roughly 500 students) dropped out of school.

The School-Work Alternative Program (SWAP) is for the most part a funding mechanism for the other work-study programs. It was created as an administrative unit for handling funds made available to the school district under the 1968 amendments to the federal Vocational Education Act. These funds provide jobs for students in fully tax-supported agencies of the city, state, or federal government. They are expressly intended for supporting work experience for "disadvantaged" youth. Operationally, the term "disadvantaged" has been given a rather broad definition. It may mean that a student is academically (i.e., low achieving) or economically disadvantaged; it may mean only that a student is a member of an ethnic minority. As the job market for the high-school-aged has generally tightened, "funded" jobs provided under SWAP have become increasingly important to the school district's entire work-study component. "Funded" jobs are also important in providing "sheltered" work experiences in which work-study supervisors have more influence on work conditions and environments than is usually possible with private employers – an important factor for many students with little work experience and/or a good deal of experience with failure and discrimination.

The SWAP program does have some students enrolled in it directly. These are students who are old enough to participate in work study (15) and who are still in junior high s l. They, too, are "disadvantaged" and are "potential dropou The arrangements for earning credits through SWAP are the same as for high school students in the GWEP program.

The final category of school-sponsored work-study programs relates to the needs of special education – students who are physically, mentally, or emotionally handicapped. Here special training programs are combined with work experiences. Most of the jobs for students in the program are funded under SWAP, such "sheltered" experiences being considered particularly appropriate for special-education students. Ninety-eight percent of the special-

education students entering the Work-Study Program receive high school diplomas. It is important to note, however, that only 60 percent of the students participating in the program can legitimately be called "special-education" students. The remaining 40 percent are "trouble makers" referred by home/school guidance counselors or attracted to job-oriented programs conducted apart from the regular school schedule. Of this 40 percent, only a third will actually graduate from high school.

One of the serious limitations of the work-study programs in the city of Syracuse is the lack of adequate counseling. Due to funding limitations, there are only two staff members available to advise students and they are heavily burdened with other responsibilities, including vocations training and the promotion of additional job opportunities within industry for the programs.

Education Programs of Central New York Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)

The BOCES of Central New York provide in central locations supplementary educational programs and services which are not economically feasible for individual school districts. There are four BOCES encompassing the five counties:

The Onondaga-Madison County BOCES (with 18 school district members). This BOCES has recently discussed a cooperative arrangement with the Syracuse School System.

Cortland-Madison County BOCES (six school district members).

Cayuga County BOCES (eight school district members).

Oswego County BOCES (nine school district members).

The BOCES provide three basic types of educational programs:

1. Occupational Programs for Secondary School Students. Students participating in these programs spend one-half of their school day at the parent high school, and the other half at the BOCES center learning marketable skills.

2. Special Education Programs for the Handicapped and Emotionally Disturbed Students. There are four types of programs here relating to the nature and extent of the students' handi-

caps. The programs for the emotionally disturbed place heavy emphasis on individualized instruction. Learning Disability Programs are for students with normal or above normal learning potential but exhibiting disorders or listening, thinking, reading, speaking, writing, spelling or arithmetic.

3. ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS. Adult education programs can be broken into two general categories. One category of programs is academically oriented for adults who do not have a high school diploma and wish to take the New York State Regents examinations or the High School Equivalency Examination. Included within this category are courses in elementary algebra and geometry, American and world history, chemistry, English and health. Courses are also available for adults who need help in basic reading, writing, and computational skills.

The other broad category of adult education courses are of both a vocational and an avocational nature. Vocational courses are similar to those offered as occupational courses for secondary school students: auto mechanics, welding, carpentry, commercial banking, retailing, industrial electronics, masonry, and many others. Avocational courses may, depending on the demand, include classes in ceramics, painting, beginning golf, sewing, genealogy, and slimnastics.

How Are BOCES Funded?

The funding and budgetary procedures for BOCES are complex. (State Education Law, Section 1958.) Generally, operating expenses are met by the participating school districts who are, in turn, reimbursed by the State Education Department. A participating school district and a BOCES may have an arrangement whereby the BOCES receives funds from the district based on a percentage of the district's WADA (Weighted Average Daily Attendance), or on a cost basis where the district is charged a tuition per pupil. Also, school districts may be charged on the basis of a calculation of the "true value" of the education provided by the BOCES. Some combination of the three formulae may be used as well. School districts may be reimbursed by the state for anywhere from 37 to 80 percent of the district's contribution depending on the district's taxable wealth.

In addition to the funds BOCES may receive from a participating school district, BOCES's are eligible to receive direct state and federal (via the state) grants. State aid to BOCES is available for approved buildings, for the cost of providing approved services,

and up to $8500 of a BOCES employee's salary. Administrative costs may not exceed 10 percent of the BOCES total budget, which requires annual state approval.

Section 3602-a of the State Education Law contains provisions for additional State aid apportionments for special education programs. Paragraph 14 authorizes the Commissioner of Education to make additional apportionments to school districts and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services for experimental programs "for the purpose of improving the quality of education in Science, Mathematics, English and Foreign Languages, and such other subjects as the Commissioner may determine," and "for the purpose of providing special educational services and facilities for pupils of greater than average ability, or for such other groups or categories of pupils as the Commissioner may determine." The authority to the Commissioner is limited by "the amount of the appropriation made therefor." However, it should be noted that the Legislature did not appropriate any funds for "experimental programs and innovations" for the 1971-72 school year.

Monies for specific vocational and continuing education programs may also be provided from federal funds channeled through the state under the authority of Titles I and VI of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act or under the Appalachian Aid Program. BOCES are also authorized to issue bonds for capital expenditures.

New York State Commissioner's Regulations on the Granting of High School Diplomas and Certificates

SECTION 103.1 [College Board ratings may be used as basis for Regents diploma.] Ratings obtained in the examination of the College Entrance Examination Board may in the discretion of the commissioner be accepted in whole or in part as basis for a Regents high school diploma. Such records shall be submitted to the department in the form of a certification from the secretary of the

College Entrance Examination Board.

103.2 High school diplomas. In order to secure a State diploma of any type the following requirements must be met:

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(a) The satisfactory completion of an approved four-year course of study in a registered four-year or six-year secondary school, including English, social studies including American history, health, physical education and such other special requirements as are required by statute and (Regents regulations) established by the Commissioner of Education.

(b) The passing of Regents examinations in certain specified subjects with certification by the principal to the completion of the remainder of 18 units.

103.3 State high school equivalency diploma. (a) Requirements (1) Candidates must have been present within the State of New York for at least one month prior to the examination and be 19 years of age or over. However, such persons who are 17 years of age or over are also eligible if they:

(i) have not been regularly enrolled students in a full-time high school program of instruction for a period of at least one year, or were members of a high school class which has graduated.

(ii) are residents of a narcotic addiction control center, or inmates of a correctional institution or patients in a hospital in the State of New York and the head of such institution certifies that the diploma constitutes an essential element of the rehabilitation program.

(2) Candidates must either take the general comprehensive examination prescribed for the program and achieve a standing designated as satisfactory by the Commissioner of Education or provide satisfactory evidence that they have successfully completed 24 credits or the equivalent as a recognized candidate for a college-level degree or certificate at an approved institution.

(3) The following persons who have been present within the State of New York for at least one month prior to the examination but do not meet fully the requirement under paragraph (1) above may, upon proper application, be admitted to the examination:

(i) persons who are required to provide scores on the examination for enlistment in the armed forces of the United States, and

(ii) candidates for admission to a program of post-secondary education for which high school graduation is the normal prerequisite.

A transcript of the scores for such persons will be mailed to the agency or institution requesting it, but a diploma will not be issued until such time as the person becomes fully qualified.

(b) Time and place of examination. The examinations for the high school equivalency diploma shall be held at such times and places as shall be designated by the Commissioner of Education.

(c) Application. Candidates must submit an individual application in the form and manner prescribed by the Commissioner.

(d) Retesting. A candidate may take the examination for the high school equivalency diploma more than once. A period of at least two months must elapse between testing periods. A different form of the examination shall be used for each retesting. The application procedure for each retesting shall be the same as for the original testing. On each retesting, a candidate shall have the option either of retaking one or two of the five tests in the battery or of retaking all five tests. Candidates who do not qualify for the diploma on the basis of retest scores shall have their eligibility for the diploma re-evaluated on the basis of the highest score obtained on each test previously taken.

103.4 Local high school equivalency diploma. Board of education specified by the commissioner may award a local high school equivalency diploma based upon experimental programs approved by the commissioner.